

# Free Country

**WHEN NELSON MANDELA'S** African National Congress was exiled at the height of South Africa's decades-long apartheid struggle, the leader accepted an offer of shelter from insurance tycoon Douw Steyn—long before it was acceptable for a white person to make such an offer. Decades later, Mandela still lives part-time at Steyn's estate in the Waterberg Mountains, the Shambala Game Reserve, which the friends now share with a select number of outside guests.

Opened to the public in 2008, Shambala offers one of the most exclusive safari experiences in Africa. The 30,000-acre estate, which is located about two-and-a-half hours north of Johannesburg by car, includes Steyn's 23,000-square-foot villa, Mandela's countryside house, and 15 smaller chalets that altogether sleep 40 guests at capacity. The reserve accepts only one group at a time, which means that when you stumble upon a den of lions (Shambala is home to the Big Five as well as more elusive species), you will never share the pride

with a pack of Land Rovers from other lodges.

Seven of the chalets flank Steyn's French-and-Tuscan-style villa on a hillside above a lake and dam. Views from all of the accommodations are postcard-perfect: burnt-orange bushland rising to rolling mountains and sprinkled with wandering animals. The views from the rooms are even more enjoyable in the company of in-house masseuses wielding African essential oils. Beginning in October, guests will also be able to receive treatments at a new spa that Shambala is opening beside a river on the reserve.

Mandela's Shambala retreat is located in a remote corner of the property and used for lodging only when necessary for large groups. But the home is open to guests as a reconciliation center, where they can enjoy breakfast in the company of the former South African president's art collection.

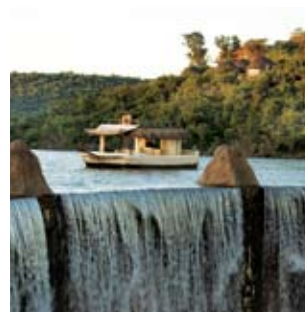
—KEVIN RAUB

*Shambala Game Reserve*, +27.11.292.6030, [www.shambalagamereserve.com](http://www.shambalagamereserve.com)



**SETTING**  
A 30,000-acre private game reserve in South Africa's Waterberg Mountains, two-and-a-half hours north of Johannesburg.

**SLEEPING**  
Two residences and 15 chalets sleep a maximum of 40 guests.



**DINING**  
Chefs from Johannesburg's Saxon Hotel (also owned by Steyn) offer creative takes on South African game (pastrami-dusted ostrich filet, Cajun-spiced impala).

**WELLNESS**  
Opening in October, a small riverfront spa will feature stunning cliff views and offer treatments with local marula oils.

**DIVERSIONS**  
Game drives, bush walks, and lake cruises highlight a typical day; sundowners and stargazing fill most evenings.

**RATES**  
The estate is available to one group at a time, with prices starting at \$1,355 per person.